

authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to identify and designate certain areas of the marine environment which are of special national significance as National Marine Sanctuaries, and provides authority for comprehensive and coordinated conservation and management of these marine areas, and activities affecting them, in a manner that complements existing regulatory authorities. Further, section 312 of the NMSA (16 U.S.C. 1443) provides that any person who destroys, causes the loss of, or injures any Sanctuary resource is liable to the United States for response costs and damages. Monies received are used to reimburse the Secretary for response actions and damage assessments and to fund the restoration, replacement, or acquisition of the equivalent of injured, destroyed, or lost Sanctuary resources.

To help protect and manage the ecological, historical, educational, recreational, and aesthetic qualities of the National Marine Sanctuaries, the National Marine Sanctuaries Program (NMSP) and OR&R will prepare a seagrass restoration PEIS for Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) and a coral reef restoration PEIS for the FKNMS and Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary. The PEISs, among other objectives, will set forth methodologies and guidelines for restoration actions arising out of injuries to Sanctuary resources. It is NMSP's intent to prepare these PEISs such that a tiered process can be used in the preparation of future environmental documents concerning restoration actions within National Marine Sanctuaries. Accordingly, the PEISs will facilitate the development of both subsequent environmental assessments (EAs) and individual restoration plans designed to restore Sanctuary resources.

Public scoping meetings were held in Marathon, FL, on March 6, 2003. Extensive local media and notification through targeted electronic mail listings are being used prior to the preparation of the Draft PEISs for those persons, agencies, and/or organizations interested in contributing comments for the development of the Draft PEISs. Public meetings will also be held concurrent with the public comment period to accept comments on the Draft PEIS. Notice of these subsequent meetings will be published in the **Federal Register**. All substantive comments provided during the public comment period, both written and oral, will be considered in the preparation of the Final PEIS and will become part of the public record (*i.e.*, names, addresses, letters of comment, comment provided during public meetings). Comments and

suggestions are invited from all interested parties to ensure that the full range of issues related to this proposed action and all significant issues are identified. Comments and/or questions concerning the preparation of these PEISs should be directed to Harriet Sopher at the address or phone listed above.

The following draft outlines will form the basis for the scoping discussion.

Proposed draft outline for the Coral Reef Restoration PEIS:

1. Executive Summary
 1. Overview
 - 1.1.1 Introduction
 - 1.1.2 Background
 - 1.1.3 Purpose and need for action
 - 1.1.4 Summary and scope of programmatic environmental impact statement
2. Restoration Alternatives
 - 2.1 No Action
 - 2.2 Physical Restoration
 - 2.2.1 Debris, Sediment and Rubble Removal
 - 2.2.2 Emergency Stabilization
 - 2.2.3 Framework and Rubble Stabilization
 - 2.2.3.1 Limestone boulders and tremie concrete
 - 2.2.3.2 Preformed concrete/limestone units
 - 2.2.3.3 In situ formation of semi-artificial substrate
 - 2.2.3.4 Concrete pillows, geotextile mattresses, tubes filled with concrete
 - 2.2.3.5 Gabions, prefabricated steel or tensor grid cages containing loose rubble
 - 2.3 Revetment mats
 - 2.3 Biological Restoration
 - 2.3.1 Emergency Triage
 - 2.3.2 Transplantation
 - 2.3.3 Enhancement of Recruitment
 - 2.3.4 Community Modification
 - 2.4 Acquisition of Equivalent Natural Resources and Services
 - 2.5 Criteria for Determining Environmentally Appropriate Alternative(s)
 - 2.5.1 Recovery Time Horizons
 - 2.5.2 Potential for Collateral Injury
 - 2.5.3 Susceptibility to additional injury from natural disturbance events
 - 2.5.4 Susceptibility to additional injury from human-caused disturbances
 - 2.5.5 Technical feasibility
 - 2.5.6 Likelihood of success
 - 2.5.7 Significance of the injured resource
3. Affected Environment
 - 3.1 Habitat Types
 - 3.2 Florida Keys, Florida
 - 3.2.1 Physical Environment
 - 3.2.2 Biological Resources
 - 3.2.3 Cultural Resources
 - 3.2.4 Social and Economic Environment
 - 3.2.5 Existing Jurisdictional Responsibilities and Institutional Arrangements
 - 3.3 Flower Gardens and Stetson Bank, Gulf of Mexico
 - 3.3.1 Physical Environment
 - 3.3.2 Biological Resources
 - 3.3.3 Cultural Resources
 - 3.3.4 Social and Economic Environment
 - 3.3.5 Existing Jurisdictional Responsibilities and Institutional Arrangements

4. Environmental Consequences
 - 4.1 Environmental Impacts
 - 4.2 Cumulative Effects
 - 4.3 Mitigation Measures
- Proposed draft outline for the Seagrass Restoration PEIS:

1. Purpose of and Need for Action
 - 1.1 Purpose
 - 1.2 Need for Proposed Action
2. Seagrass Restoration Alternatives
 - 2.1 Seagrass Restoration Selection Alternatives
 - 2.2 Seagrass Restoration Options
 - 2.2.1 No-Action
 - 2.2.2 Seagrass Transplants
 - 2.2.3 Bird Stakes
 - 2.2.4 Fertilizer Spikes
 - 2.2.5 Sediment Fill
 - 2.2.6 Sediment Tubes
 - 2.2.7 Berm Redistribution
 - 2.2.8 Channel Markers
 - 2.3 Proposed Actions
3. Affected Environment
 - 3.1 Location and Area Uses
 - 3.2 Surrounding Land Use
 - 3.3 Climate
 - 3.4 Air Quality
 - 3.5 Noise
 - 3.6 Geology
 - 3.7 Water Quality
 - 3.8 Physical Parameters
 - 3.9 Biological Resources
 - 3.10 Cultural Resources
 - 3.11 Hazardous and Toxic Substances
 - 3.12 Socioeconomics
 - 3.13 Quality of Life
4. Environmental and Socioeconomic Consequences
 - 4.1 Introduction
 - 4.2 No Action Alternative
 - 4.3 Seagrass Transplant Alternative
 - 4.4 Bird Stakes Alternative
 - 4.5 Fertilizer Spikes
 - 4.6 Sediment Fill Alternative
 - 4.7 Sediment Tubes
 - 4.8 Berm Redistribution Alternative
 - 4.9 Channel Markers
 - 4.10 Cumulative Effects
 - 4.11 Mitigation Measures
 - 4.12 Conclusions
5. Implementation of the Regional Restoration Plan
6. Relationship to Other Laws and Programs

Dated: March 3, 2003.

Jamison S. Hawkins,

Acting Assistant Administrator for Ocean Services and Coastal Zone Management.

[FR Doc. 03-6878 Filed 3-21-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-08-M

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 031403E]

Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Reef Fish Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico; Amendment 21; Public Hearings

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of public hearings; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) will convene a public hearing to receive comments on the Council's proposed Amendment 21 to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan (Amendment 21) to extend the time period for the Madison/Swanson and Steamboat Lumps marine reserves beyond their June 16, 2004, expiration date.

DATES: The public hearing will be held in April. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to, and copies of the scoping document are available from, the Gulf Council, 3018 U.S. Highway 301, North, Suite 1000, Tampa, Florida 33619.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Steven Atran, Population Dynamics Statistician, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; telephone 813-228-2815.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The public hearing will be convened on the Council's proposed Amendment 21 to extend the time period for the Madison/Swanson and Steamboat Lumps marine reserves beyond their June 16, 2004, expiration date.

The Madison/Swanson and Steamboat Lumps marine reserves were implemented on June 19, 2000, with a 4-year sunset provision. The Madison/Swanson site is approximately 115 square nautical miles in size and is located about 40 nautical miles southwest of Apalachicola City, FL. Steamboat Lumps is approximately 104 square nautical miles in size and is located about 95 nautical miles west of Tarpon Springs, FL. Within each area, fishing is prohibited for all species except for highly migratory species, i.e., tunas, marlin, oceanic sharks, sailfishes, and swordfish. These marine reserves were created primarily to protect a portion of the gag spawning aggregations and to protect a portion of the offshore population of male gag. The areas are also suitable habitat and provide protection for many other species, such as scamp, red grouper, warsaw grouper, speckled hind, red snapper, red porgy, and others.

It was the Council's intent to prohibit the use of any fishing gear within the closed areas in order to maximize enforceability of the closed area as well as minimize the negative impact from incidental catch and release of reef fish while targeting other species. For this

reason, the Council asked that the NMFS Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Division implement compatible closed area regulations for the species under their management jurisdiction (tunas, swordfish, oceanic sharks, and billfishes). This led to a legal challenge from a recreational fishing organization. The recreational organization felt that restrictions on fishing for migratory species higher up in the water column were unwarranted because they would have no impact on the bottom reef fish species. As part of a settlement to the legal challenge, NMFS agreed to hold the Council's request to implement an HMS closure in abeyance while research is conducted into the impact of the no-take areas, the effect of pelagic trolling on and ability to reach reef fish species, and the impact on enforceability by allowing pelagic trolling in the no-take areas. Reports on the results of the research into these areas are scheduled to be presented at the May 12-15, 2003, Council meeting where final action is to be taken. No action will result in the two reserves expiring on June 16, 2004, and the areas re-opening to all fishing.

The public hearing will be held from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Wednesday, April 9, 2003, Tampa Airport Hilton, 2225 Lois Avenue, Tampa, FL; telephone: 813-877-6688.

In addition, public testimony will be taken at the May 12-15, 2003, Council meeting at the Edgewater Beach Resort, 11212 Front Beach Road, Panama City Beach, FL. (The exact date and time for public testimony at the May Council meeting will be announced at a later time.)

Copies of the draft amendment for these meetings can be obtained by calling 813-228-2815.

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Anne Alford at the Council (see **ADDRESSES**) by April 2, 2003.

Dated: March 19, 2003.

Richard W. Surdi,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 03-6958 Filed 3-21-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 031903A]

New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduling a public meeting of its Joint Enforcement Oversight Committee and Advisory Panel and its Groundfish Oversight Committee in April, 2003 to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Recommendations from these groups will be brought to the full Council for formal consideration and action, if appropriate.

DATES: The meetings will be held on April 7 and 8, 2003. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times.

ADDRESSES: The meetings will be held in Newburyport and Wakefield, MA. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific locations.

Council address: New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council; telephone: (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Meeting Dates and Agendas

Monday, April 7, 2003 at 9:30 a.m. – Joint Enforcement Committee and Advisory Panel Meeting.

Location: New England Fishery Management Council Office, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950; telephone: (978) 465-0492.

The committee and advisory panel will discuss and review the Monkfish enforcement analysis. They will also discuss and review the Habitat enforcement analyses for Amendment 10 to the Scallop Fishery Management Plans (FMP) and Groundfish Amendment 13 FMP. They also plan to discuss and recommend Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) requirements in the U.S./Canada agreement area. The U.S. Coast Guard is concerned if there are (1) vessels required to have VMS, and (2) vessels in the area that just sign in for a fixed period, at the same time. Given time they will review other business.